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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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29 Hazen Drive, Concord, New Hampshire 03301 • (603) 271-3503 • [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov)

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## Lake Protection Tips Some Do's and Don'ts for Maintaining Healthy Lakes

Activities that increase the input of [phosphorus](#) and sediment erosion into lakes are not good; however those that decrease these inputs will greatly help prolong the health of lakes. Listed below are activities that lake residents and others can do to help reduce phosphorus and sediment inputs.

- Pump out your septic tank every three to five years, or whenever the sludge level exceeds one-third of the tank capacity.
- Maintain your [septic system](#) properly (Contact the NHDES to obtain several free informational brochures). Be sure your system is designed to handle the load it receives. A leach field should be increased in size whenever the frequency (seasonal to year-round) or volume (additional people, washing machines, etc.) of use increases.
- Check your leach field for soft or wet areas or septic smells. Replace faulty systems.
- Do not bathe, shampoo, or wash boats, pets, or other objects in the lake with soap or phosphorus-containing detergents. Do not wash automobiles near lakes where the detergent can run into the water.
- Use low or non-phosphate detergent. Take your clothes to a laundromat located outside the lake's drainage area.
- Keep land clearing to a minimum. Revegetate bare areas to minimize erosion to the lake. Roads and paths leading to the lake should be curved to reduce erosion.
- Maintain a buffer zone of natural vegetation along the shore to contain erosion and assimilate nutrients before they reach the lake.
- Do not use fertilizer near the lake shore. Encourage shore fronts with natural vegetation, rather than green, manicured lawns.
- Do not burn brush or leaves near the shore; the nutrients remain behind to be washed into the lake during the first rain. Do not dump leaves or grass clippings in or near the lake. They also add nutrients to the water.
- Do not urinate or defecate in the lake, and don't allow pets to do the same. Cows, horses, or other groups of animals should not be housed near the lake where the phosphorus in their manure can be washed into the lake by rain.
- Do not feed ducks or other aquatic organisms; there is plenty of natural food available. Nutrients in the feed material, which is produced outside the lake's watershed, will be added to the lake through the organism's feces. Also, by discouraging the duck population, you can reduce the risk of [swimmers' itch](#) in your area.
- Do not use powerful outboard motors in shallow areas. The nutrient-laden bottom sediments can be churned into the overlying water to support increased algae growth.